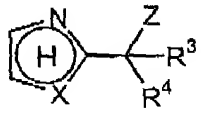
Serial No. 09/862,208

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend Claims 1 as follows:

1. (Currently amended) A method of synthesizing highly substituted azole compounds having the general formula (Ia):



(Ia)

wherein

X is selected from the group consisting of NH, NR^A wherein R^A is hydrogen or –R wherein R is aralkyl;

represents a 5 membered aromatic ring structure;

wherein the 5 membered ring is optionally substituted with one to three substituents independently selected from the group consisting of halogen, hydroxy, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, alkenyl, cycloalkyl, alkoxy, aryl, aralkyl, heterocyclyl, amino, mono-or di-substituted amino, cyano nitro, -COOR, -COR, $-SO_2R$ and $-CONR^BR^C$; wherein the amine substituents are independently selected from alkyl, cycloalkyl, aryl or aralkyl; wherein the cycloalkyl, aryl or heterocyclyl may be further optionally substituted with one or more substituent is independently selected from halogen, hydroxy, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, alkoxy, amino, mono-or di-substituted amino, cyano or nitro;

Z is $-OR^A$ wherein R^A is $-CONR^CR^D$;

R^3 is selected from the group consisting of hydrogen, alkyl, aralkyl, cycloalkyl, and fluorinated alkyl; wherein the aralkyl may be optionally substituted with one or more substituents independently selected from halogen, hydroxy, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, alkoxy, amino, mono-or di-substituted amino, cyano or nitro;

R^4 is selected from the group consisting of, alkyl, aryl, aralkyl, cycloalkyl, fluorinated alkyl, alkenyl, and alkynyl; wherein the alkyl, alkenyl, alkynyl, aryl or aralkyl may be optionally substituted with one or more substituents independently selected from halogen, hydroxy, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, alkoxy, aryl, amino, mono-or di-substituted amino, cyano or nitro;

R is selected from the group consisting of alkyl, aryl, aralkyl, cycloalkyl, and fluorinated alkyl; wherein the aryl or aralkyl may be optionally substituted with one or more substituents independently selected from halogen, hydroxy, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, alkoxy, amino, mono-or di-substituted amino, cyano or nitro;

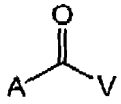
R^B is independently selected from the group consisting of hydrogen, -R, -COOR, -COR, $-SO_2R$, -SOR and $-CONR^CR^D$;

R^C and R^D are independently selected from the group consisting of hydrogen, alkyl, aryl, aralkyl, cycloalkyl, and fluorinated alkyl; wherein the aryl or aralkyl may be optionally substituted with one or more substituents independently selected from halogen, hydroxy, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, alkoxy, amino, mono-or di-substituted amino, cyano or nitro;

which method comprises reacting a compound of formula (III)

(III)

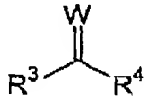
with a compound of formula (IV)



(IV)

wherein A is selected from F, Cl, Br or –OC(O)-t-butyl, and wherein V is a sterically hindered group, in a non-protic solvent;

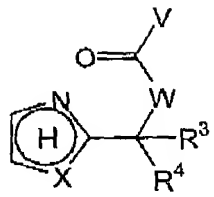
and then reacting with a compound of formula (V)



(V)

wherein W is -O,

to form the corresponding compound of formula (Ic)



(Ic)

and reacting the compound of formula (Ic) with a compound of formula (VI)

Z-H

(VI)

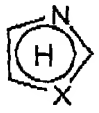
to yield the corresponding compound of formula (Ia).

2. (Original) The process of Claim 1 wherein V is selected from the group consisting of t-butyl, O-t-butyl, O-isopropyl, O-adamantyl, adamantyl, $N(alkyl)_2$, $N(aryl)_2$, 2,6-dimethylphenyl, 2,6-disubstituted phenyl.

3. (Original) The process of Claim 1 wherein the non-protic solvent is selected from the group consisting of acetonitrile, dioxane and THF.

Claims 4-20 cancelled.

21. (previously amended) The process of Claim 1 wherein

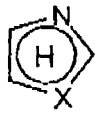
 is selected from the group consisting of imidazolyl, substituted imidazolyl (wherein the substituents on the imidazolyl group are one or more independently selected from halogen, alkyl, aryl, aralkyl, cycloalkyl, or alkoxycarbonyl, $-C(O)N(alkyl)_2$);

Z is $-OC(O)N(alkyl)_2$;

R^3 is selected from the group consisting of hydrogen, alkyl, and trifluoromethyl;

and R^4 is selected from the group consisting of alkyl, alkenyl, cycloalkyl, aryl, substituted aryl (where the aryl substituent is halogen, alkyl, alkoxy, nitro, amino, alkylamino or dialkylamino), and aralkyl;

22. (previously amended) The process of Claim 21 wherein



is selected from the group consisting of 1-imidazolyl, 1-methyl-imidazolyl, 1-phenyl-imidazolyl, 1-benzyl-imidazolyl, 1-(di(*i*-propyl)aminocarbonyl)-imidazolyl, 1-methyl-5-chloro-imidazolyl, 1-methyl-4,5-dichloro-imidazolyl, and 1-methyl-5-methoxycarbonyl-imidazolyl;

Z is selected from the group consisting of $-OC(O)N(methyl)_2$, $-OC(O)N(ethyl)_2$, and $-OC(O)N(i\text{-}propyl)_2$;

R^3 is selected from the group consisting of hydrogen, methyl, and trifluoromethyl;

and R^4 is selected from the group consisting of methyl, ethyl, t-butyl, i-propyl, cyclohexyl, phenyl, 4-methoxyphenyl, 4-chlorophenyl, 4-nitrophenyl, benzyl, phenylethyl, $-CH=CH_2$, and $-CH=CHCH_3$.

Claims 23-30 are cancelled.